

Life on the Rails

Catherine Dumé
FEATURE

As a second-year student, you would think that I would have a bunch of favourite university memories. However, that isn't the case, as I was a commuter. This is why if you are not a commuter, you won't understand this story or when I say I had only so many hours in a day before having to hop onto Line 1 and make my way home. I was the type of student who was in and out like a thief. While I don't know what the "nightlife" was like on campus, in 2019, I was a master train traveller. I knew every shortcut and could get anywhere from anywhere. Even if I didn't know where I was, all I needed to do was to find the nearest train station and I was golden.

As a commuter, I experienced crazy things. Maybe not an insane serial killer who forces an old policeman to murder passengers if he didn't play the game right, as was in the plot of the 2018 film *The Commuter*, but if I were to pick my favourite memory from my first year at the University of Toronto, it would be December 8th, the night I was kicked off the train.

I am sure I speak for all commuters when I say that we hate when there is an emergency on the rails. That could be a person falling into the gap or a dangerous individual. Of course, these emergencies are dire and should be treated with caution, but when they occur, you have no idea what is happening; all you know is that you're being kicked off the train car and are forced to find your way home.

Story continues on Page 2

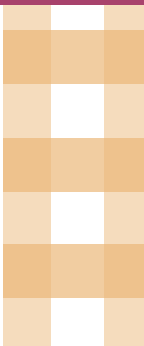
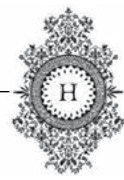


Photo courtesy of Hayley Vlcek

Inside this issue...	COVID-19 Experience 3	Education Crisis 7
Death of Cinema 8	The Netflix Effect 12	Innis Pick-Up Lines 17



That was my situation one cold Wednesday, December night. Students from my blogging course had just concluded our field trip. After waving goodbye to our professor, two of my friends and I entered Dundas Station.

This is when I made my first mistake. Maybe I was too exhausted from walking or distracted by my conversations with my friends, but I didn't realize I had stepped onto the southbound train with them. In case you are unfamiliar, a southbound train from Dundas will take you down to Union Station, and eventually back to the St. George campus. This was bad news considering I was trying to go north.

It wasn't until one of my friends pointed it out did I realize I was going the wrong way.

By that point, I was already panicking and getting frustrated with myself for not paying attention. But I wasn't worried. All I had to do was get off at the next station, hop on a northbound train and make my way home. I got off at St. Andrew, and got on the train, took a seat and waited for it to move.

But it didn't. Apparently, there was a delay. I assured myself that that was normal, as delays happen all the time. Except that particular delay lagged on forever.

This is where I made my second mistake. If only I had realized that I could have stayed on the train going south I could have reached

St. George, switched lines and travelled to Bloor-Yonge, switched back to

Line 1 and was able to travel to Sheppard-Yonge all in half an hour — delays withstanding. If only I had realized that in time, I could have stayed with my friends and wouldn't have had to go through an ordeal just to get home.

However, I ended up watching my friends leave me behind on the only south train that would arrive for the next hour.

At 6:30 pm, all trains were forcibly closed, and at that time, I didn't know why. In one of the tunnels, a bunch of grumpy commuters were effectively kicked off the train and offered a bus ride.

I hate transit buses. Sure, they are slow in traffic, but the worst thing about buses is the fact that it reveals the nasty in everyone. The previous Monday, there was a fire in the tunnels. Luckily I wasn't one of the people who had to walk in a dark tunnel with smoke burning, but I was one of the unfortunate people who were stuck with having to take the bus.

It was nine in the morning and the staff told me to stand in line and wait for a bus to take me to the next station. I almost asked him, "Sir, what line?" I kid you not, there was a mob out on the sidewalk.

You would think as Canadians we would politely line up and passive-aggressively argue over who should be the kinder person. But no, I saw adults screaming like children. Whenever a new commuter joined the "line" and went to the front, the people would cuss at them and force them to go to the back of the line like a bunch of kindergarteners.

Then a bus would arrive, and that mob would squish you against the bus and trample you under their feet. You basically had to

fight to the death just to get into the door. This would happen again and again for hours.

It was almost noon when a shaky old man who was trying to get in and those beasts stopped fighting and let the old man through and helped him get in with his walker as if they were doing a nice thing. The moment he got inside, the fighting resumed. And like a spoiled daughter, I called my father to pick me up.

Unfortunately, I couldn't leave this time. It was almost seven at night, I was in the middle of the city and my phone was dead. I was about to take a bus when I overheard a couple of commuters saying that they could walk to Union instead. It wasn't far so I decided to follow the crowd. However, at night I had no idea where I was going. I could barely see the street signs. After walking for a bit, I noticed there was an intersection and the crowd I was following was now splitting in two. I scanned the crowd looking for anyone who I could talk to. Surely I thought there was somebody who knows where Union Station is. My eyes landed on a middle-aged woman.

"Excuse me, do you know where Union Station is?" The woman looked at me and burst out laughing.

"I don't know where it is either!" Her laugh startled me, but instead of feeling uncomfortable, I joined her and the two of us ended up laughing with tears in our eyes. Perhaps it was the unfortunate circumstances we found ourselves in that lead to us

sticking together for the rest of the way. At last, we found someone else who knew where the station was, and we followed them to Union.

There was a reason why I didn't want to get off at Union the first time; I noticed I was going in the wrong direction and because

Union is huge. All of the buses leave Union Station and go towards the city. You can even get to Pearson Airport from there. It's business central, the best place to get lost.

If it wasn't for my new friend, I probably wouldn't have found the northbound train platform. Eventually, it arrived at 8 pm. After a long night of stress, I was ready to go home. I let out a sigh when I sat down between two old women. I closed my eyes, listening to the train as it creaks, groans, and whistles. My body swayed as the train wobbled, as if on a tight rope made of rusty metal. At last, I reached Sheppard-Yonge, where my father was waiting for me with the car. It was 9 pm.

It wasn't until I was in my bed did I learn that the reason I was kicked out of the train was because some driver collided into the TTC fence. To be honest, I was a bit disappointed. After hearing about the fire on Monday, I was expecting something wilder. But I guess that's life on the TTC. You never know what's going to happen next.

After telling my story, you might be wondering why it's my favourite university moment of 2019. The truth is this experience is only one of the many moments in my life where things don't pan out the way I wanted. And if 2020 could be anything, it was the year no one expected. Even 2021 surprised us. We expected to have a calmer year, yet within a week, there was an insurrection at the US Capitol. Life is unpredictable. Despite our best efforts, we can't plan for a riot, a fire, a bad driver, the death of a loved one, or losing our jobs. But what we can do is be flexible, stay calm, and always take life one day at a time. ♦

And if 2020 could be anything, it was the year no one expected. Even 2021 surprised us. — Catherine Dumé

My Experience With COVID-19

Tony Hu
FEATURE

This piece addresses themes of suicide.

I never thought I would have COVID-19.

Despite the over 100 million COVID-19 cases worldwide, none of those people have passed through my orbit. I didn't know a single person with COVID-19. That's not exactly true — after all, I watched the news, and political figures like Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and more have tested positive for COVID-19. But within my small, quiet neighbourhood of Scarborough, Ontario, I didn't know anyone who had COVID-19.

You might be wondering how I got COVID-19. It's a reasonable question but not one that I think is incredibly useful. It leads to assigning blame and feelings of anger, guilt, and shame. Yet the virus isn't the fault of any particular person. It's more useful for people to confront the pandemic together. I say this in an attempt to comfort myself. When I was feeling ill with COVID-related symptoms, I often questioned why and how I got COVID-19. I stayed home and followed public health directives. Why did I get COVID, when I knew friends who were breaking public health guidelines? I also felt frustrated with the timing of my symptoms. With the somewhat recent surge in cases in Ontario, I was extra vigilant about my safety. Having escaped the virus for almost a year, why did I get it now, when I'm being extra cautious?

I'll take some time here to describe my symptoms. My symptoms started on January 19, 2021. I felt muscle and joint pain in my legs. It felt like I had done thousands of squats when I had barely been active that day. That night, I struggled to sleep, experiencing sore throat, chills, difficulty swallowing, dry cough, and fever. At this point, I suspected that I had COVID-19. I wore a mask and limited my movement inside my house. Tylenol helped with the fever, but by the night of January 20, I was in so much discomfort that I left the online

Innis College Student Society (ICSS) budget meeting halfway through and went to bed.

The emotions attached to my COVID-19 symptoms felt much like the highs and lows of a rollercoaster. At the lows, I worried that I'd die from COVID-19. I imagined getting hospitalized, intubated, and put into the ICU, surrounded by doctors and allied healthcare professionals. I pictured their horror as they saw me: a young patient before the age of 20, in such critical condition. I was frightened and concerned about my life being cut short before accomplishing my dreams. At the highs, I questioned what meaning there was for me to stay alive in a constant state of suffering. I wondered why I should go on in my life if I continued to feel so horrible. I couldn't see the end.

Compounding all this, I faced the reality that everyone in my household had COVID-19. That's six people, including me. I managed not only my symptoms but checked in with everyone else as well. I worried not only for myself but for everyone else too. Living in a multi-generational home, I had to try to protect my elders while encountering the challenges presented by limited space. The language barrier between me and my elders meant it was difficult to know how they were feeling.

I gave My Student Support Program (1-844-451-9700) a call to talk about how I was feeling. I gave Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000) a call to discuss managing symptoms and was nudged to take a COVID-19 test. I got tested on January 21 and received a positive result on January 22. The positive test result was expected and in a weird way, I was hoping that I would have a positive result. I was so confident that I had COVID-19 since all my symptoms suggested COVID was the cause. I was even a little worried about what my diagnosis would be if I tested negative for COVID.

In two days, I got a follow-up call with someone from Toronto Public Health. I would be cleared to end self-isolation on January 29, 10 days after my first symptom. I felt much better after testing positive for COVID. A lot of things fell in place, and I received a lot of support from healthcare providers, friends, and more. I also arranged to stay at the Toronto Voluntary Self Isolation Centre, a converted hotel for COVID-positive patients who can't self-isolate safely at home. At the hotel, which is near Pearson International Airport, I had never felt more like a leech, but it had been a wonderful experience. Toronto public health arranged for my transport to the hotel and catered three vegetarian meals a day. At home, I felt like I was in a hospital with all the coughing going on around me. Being

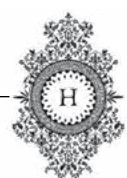
away from home made me feel like I'm on vacation: I could avoid my family members, and focus on healing myself.

Through this entire whirlwind of COVID-19, academics have been one of the most challenging things. I mentioned how the timing of getting COVID was frustrating. That's because I wanted this semester to go better than all of my other semesters at U of T. Once it became clear that I could not do that, I started worrying about missing classes and assessments. I did the easy thing which was declaring absences on ACORN. I also had to do the hard thing which was telling professors that I was experiencing "COVID-19 related symptoms" and that I was requesting "academic accommodations for any upcoming assessments." This was such a stressful experience, as I tried to strike a balance between the ideal situation of not doing any work for ten or so days and doing some work to not fall too behind.

Fast forward to today and I'm feeling much better and set to be released. My symptoms have evolved and while some, like fever, are no longer in my life, others, like cough, continue to be very active. I am also very displeased to report that I have lost my sense of smell and taste.

I'm sharing my story to provide some insight into what life is like with COVID-19. Perhaps this story will help you nail your diagnosis if you think you might have COVID. Perhaps this story will show you how to navigate school and life with COVID. I also hope to break down the stigma around COVID-19, especially as a young person with COVID and as a Chinese Canadian with COVID — a group that has faced and continues to face a lot of racism during the pandemic. ♦





Your Bad Posture Has Permanent Effects —Here's How to Correct It

Anna Pan

STUDENT LIFE

As many of you may relate, hunching over a computer for 12 hours straight has been my everyday routine for the past 10 months. I didn't do much about my bad posture except complain about all the neck and back pain.

Eventually, my discomfort grew, and I turned to fitness as a last resort. Since I started out incredibly weak, I excitingly witnessed improvements fairly quickly. However, the sudden presence of muscles also drew my attention to an asymmetry in my shoulders. My right shoulder slanted downwards while my left remained parallel to my head. Immediately, I feared I had caused an exercise-related injury.

Fortunately, I was well-versed in my Studentcare health policy. As a full-time University of Toronto undergraduate student, I knew my insurance covered [\\$30 per chiropractor/physiotherapist appointment, for up to 20 visits a year](#). This meant that I would pay a maximum of \$15 for each appointment at a Studentcare Network clinic. Since physiotherapists don't require referrals, I went online and booked the earliest appointment at Bay and College Physiotherapy and Rehab (they are wonderful; I highly recommend them).

To my surprise, my physiotherapist said excessive slouching is what caused my curved shoulder. Moreover, my bad posture resulted in "nerd neck" development and pushed my collarbones inward. Beyond day-to-day aching and stiffness, my poor sitting position had a lasting impact on my muscles and bones. Not to mention, my crooked décolletage was certainly not an attractive look.

I was prescribed three exercises to fix my posture and realign my shoulders. Now, I am going to teach you! After doing these exercises for a month, I already see results. If you are looking to correct your hunchback and get those K-pop 90-degree shoulders, I am confident this upper body workout is for you. Take a break from sitting and join me in this quick 10-minute physiotherapy session! ♦

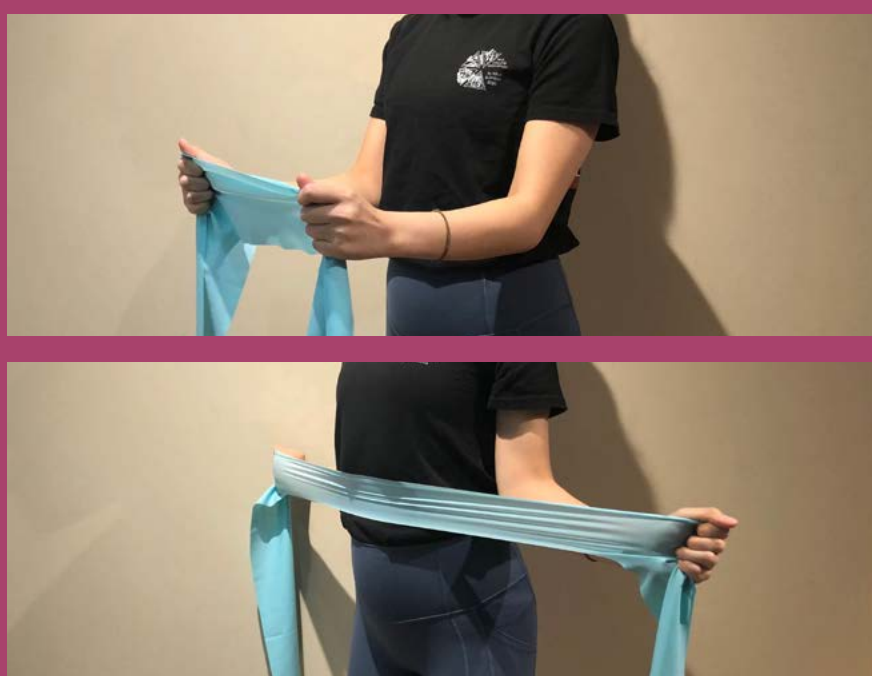
Photo courtesy of Hayley Vlcek and Anna Pan



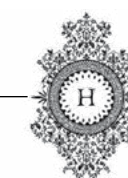
Stand shoulders' width apart, and slightly bend your knees. Keeping your shoulders flat and your elbows straight, pull the resistance band down until your arms pass your torso. Do the exercise slowly to isolate muscle movement in your triceps and shoulders.



Stand shoulders' width apart, and slightly bend your knees. Starting with your arms straight, pull the resistance band toward your stomach while keeping your arms tucked in. Try to focus on moving just your biceps, pectorals, and shoulder blades.



Stand shoulders' width apart, and hold a resistance band horizontally across your body. With your arms straight in front of you, pull the band apart while bending your elbows. All your energy should come from your shoulder blades and deltoids.



Tips From the Masthead

Innis Herald Masthead Team

STUDENT LIFE

With everything being online now, it is so easy to lose motivation and fall off track. I've found the best method to keep me in a routine is to wake up and sleep at the same time every day. Yes, even on the weekends. I have an alarm set for every day of the week at 8 am and 12 am, which serve as reminders. At first, it will be hard, but after a while, your body adapts, and you will feel tired and naturally awake at those times. It's honestly been the best thing for my productivity and health!

—Anna Pan

Dress for success! At the start of last semester, I often began my school work in the same clothes I'd worn the day before or whatever looked clean on my 'clothes chair'. I'd keep my video off during zoom classes and felt overall tired of my studies. In an attempt to fight the winter blues, I'd begun experimenting more with makeup and fashion and soon discovered that, by putting effort into my appearance, I put more effort into my school work! Additionally, I was more open to turning my video on during class (because I looked hot), which in turn encouraged me to participate more. Maybe someone in the psychology department can explain that magic. So give it a try! When it comes to staying motivated during online school, it's amazing how far a fresh outfit or nice hairstyle can go.

—Loes Streppel

Keep a physical agenda. Unlike an online planner or a checklist that you write in your notes app, a physical agenda doesn't allow me to move tasks around as easily, as I'd have to scratch out and rewrite my tasks. Thus, it makes me more motivated to get things done on the days I've set out to do them, avoiding the less than ideal messy looking weekly layout. The physical act of crossing something out as you've completed it also makes me feel more accomplished, even if it was only one simple task. As well, as all our classes are online, it's nice to write by hand for once.

—Linda Chen

After a long day of attending virtual school and work, take some time to decompress. Self-care is a priority of mine, especially during quarantine. Whether it's painting my nails, putting on a face mask, or taking a deep breath with a yoga session, I've been having a little me-time to relieve stress. Sometimes, I'll go outside for some sunshine, and feed squirrels nuts in the park -- I find it's a great distraction. Another hobby of mine -- arts and crafts. I've been hand-making cards and it's been so therapeutic. Another activity I've been loving lately is cooking and baking -- it's a great way to connect with the people you're quarantining with. In these stressful times, it may be hard to cope due to a lack of interaction, but these little distractions can make all the difference.

—Jasmine Kara

Because my school and personal spaces are the same things now, the routines associated with each bleed into each other. I find it helpful to set specific times for starting and finishing schoolwork. Obviously there are times when this tip can be compromised, such as exam season or essay deadlines, but on a low-stress, average school day, structuring my day allows me to get enough studying done while ensuring the time will come for me to close my laptop for the day, and simply relax. Also, allotting distinct schoolwork times guarantees that I won't randomly start vacuuming in the midst of writing a paper (as I said, routines start to converge in the same space). Most importantly, take care of yourself! We're all experiencing similar difficulties with online learning (and obviously the pandemic takes its unique toll on us all), so be gentle with yourself, listen to your body, and reach out for help or support if you're ever in need.

—Olivia Fraser



Photo courtesy of Mukti Patel



Toronto's Local Amazon: Skip the Line, Shop Online

Keturah Osinde

NAVIGATING THE ONLINE JUNGLE

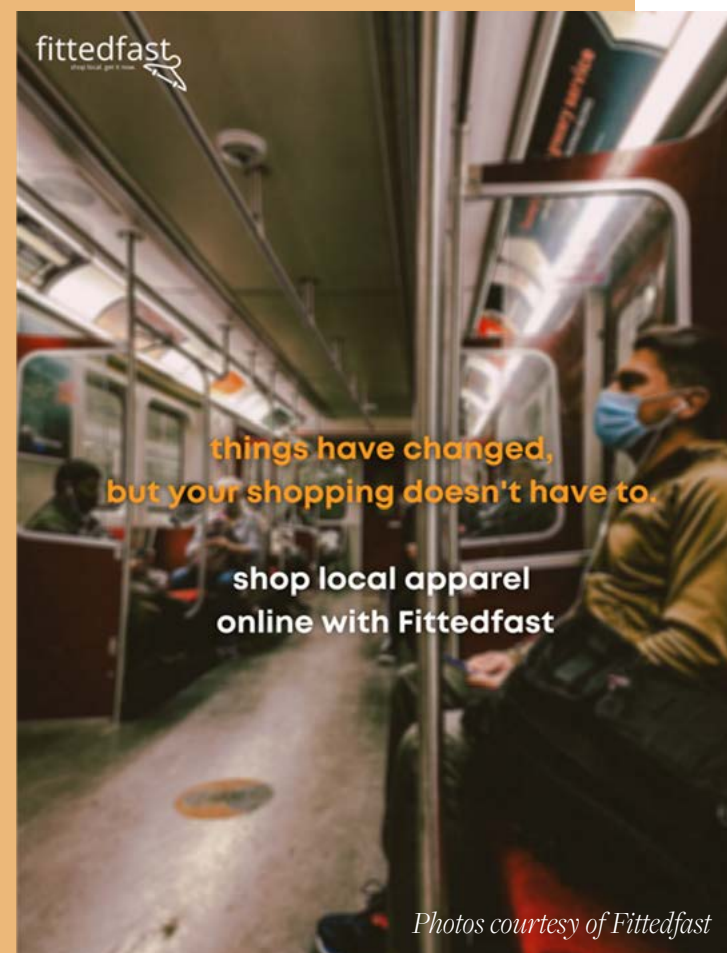
Introducing Toronto's very own solution to the current lockdown that is destroying local businesses across South-western Ontario: Fittedfast – a platform allowing locals to shop apparel businesses in the city. Founded in 2019 by 4th-year University of Toronto student, Keturah Osinde, Fittedfast aims to bridge the gap between local brick-and-mortar business and the online shopping world by allowing customers to browse local inventory online.

fittedfast

In the era of the pandemic, lockdowns, and social distancing, Fittedfast understands the reluctance of many people to leave home, and thus the growing problem of business shutdowns. As a response, Fittedfast conveniently provides customers with the ability to not only shop across all local stores in the city, but they can also expect fast 1-3 day delivery on all orders made. On the topic of how the pandemic has impacted local businesses, Kelly Saltzman, a merchant on Fittedfast notes, "It was quite the financial hit for us because we had just brought out a new children's line and other fun initiatives for the brand." Indeed, the pandemic has halted many businesses in their tracks. Fittedfast aims to support small businesses like Saltzman who have been hit hard by the global pandemic. "Fittedfast roots itself in the idea of resiliency. As we come together and invest in

local businesses by shopping their merchandise online as opposed to shopping online internationally, we invest in our local streets, playgrounds, schools and hospitals," says Osinde.

Amidst the pandemic, Fittedfast's mission is to empower local businesses to find innovative ways to survive the lockdown by offering items online with the convenience of delivery automatically taken care of for their orders. It's the local mall at your fingertips – without the mile-long line. Fittedfast has already partnered with various stores in Toronto including but not limited to: Clarendon Co, ANY7, Awoke N Aware, All Cities Clothing and Papa Love Vintage. Their merchant base is quickly growing as the city enters the second round of lockdowns, and you can begin shopping on the platform or listing your products today by accessing www.fittedfast.com. The Fittedfast team can also be reached on Instagram at @Fittedfast_ and @Fittedfast on Facebook. ♦



SOLD

Public Education In The COVID-19 Era

Drew-Anne Glennie

PRE-EXISTING SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The Ministry of Education has published detailed guidelines for a "safe" return to school amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Aside from hygienic measures like masks, handwashing, and increased cleaning, the main difference is physical distancing such as cohorts — students attending classes with only each other with the intention of decreasing the number of students that are coming in direct or indirect contact with one another. Larger high schools have a rotating schedule of online and in-person instruction to expand these efforts. Other physical distancing measures like using larger spaces for classrooms, staggered bells, maximizing entrance/exit usage, and marked routes are suggested to limit chances of exposure. The Ontario government pledged \$1.3 billion towards opening schools safely, alongside a maximum of over \$763 million from the federal government. Even so, under COVID-19, the long-standing financial cracks at the foundation of our public school system are becoming more and more clear.

Cuts Today, COVID Tomorrow

When Conservative Doug Ford was elected as premier of Ontario in June 2018, changes to public education policies were introduced within the year, including upping class sizes and expanding online learning. These proposals were met with fierce contestation from teachers, parents, and students alike. However, Ontario's public education was suffering long before Premier Ford's leadership came into effect. In 1997, former Conservative premier Mark Harris completely overhauled Ontario's education system with Bill 160. Previously, public education was funded through both provincial provisions and income taxes levied by individual school boards, allowing boards to address the unique demands of their students; with Bill 160, funding became top-down, decided by the government and in many cases incongruent with the needs on the ground. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives researcher Hugh Mackenzie emphasized in *The Local* that "pretty much anything that a school board did that didn't involve a teacher standing in front of 30 students and writing on a blackboard was not funded." *The Local* cites that, while other aspects of the bill were repealed or modified, subsequent governments did not address this core funding formula, which, according to *People for Education*, is based off of mandated average class sizes and pupil enrollment. Boards receive additional funding from special purpose grants, which include language programs, Indigenous education, special education, and more; these are decided by separate formulas, based on data points. "All of the weaknesses in the formula, the inadequate funding for technology, the inadequate funding for supports for teachers, the inadequate funding for issues that are raised by students at risk, all of those things were left in place," Mackenzie told *The Local*, "What we walk into the world of COVID-19 with is significantly more students at significantly greater risk with no funding for it."



As perhaps anticipated, funding remained at the centre of many of the conflicts surrounding public school reopening plans. For instance, the Government rejected the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) initial return to school plan that reduced elementary class sizes, requiring hiring 200 additional teachers at \$20 million, and shortened their school days for physical distancing. Toronto Public Health warned that maintaining class sizes will reduce the ability to safely social distance. The provinces' four main teachers' unions took the government to the labour board over the health and safety risks of their reopening plans, including the lack of funding for reduced class sizes. The Board refused to hear their case.

There have been 7,349 school confirmed staff or student COVID-19 cases in Ontario: Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) makes up 827 of these cases, along with TDSB's 1409.

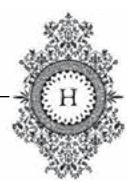
The Public-Private Divide

At face value, the contagious nature of COVID-19 transcends boundaries of class, gender, race, et cetera. Functionally, of course, this could not be further from the truth. As schools prepared to reopen in September 2020, *CTV News* covered the ways in which private schools across the country were able to invest in extra safety measures like outdoor tents, plexiglass

What we walk into the world of COVID-19 with is significantly more students at significantly greater risk — Hugh Mackenzie

barriers, air purifying systems, and extra cleaning, in some cases adding up to tens of thousands. Moreover, many private schools already boast small class sizes, making the transition to cohorting much easier. According to *People For Education* director Annie Kidder, it would take billions for public schools to match such measures, significantly less than the relief funds they were given by the government.

These COVID-19 related difficulties have highlighted fears of the privatization of Ontario's education system. Over 5500 students were reported to have left the TDSB board alone at the start of the year, whether that be because of a switch to private school, homeschooling, or moving from the region. These fears exist within a system where public-school funding is largely decided by enrolment: if those with the means leave public boards for private schools because of inadequate resources, the resources available in the public system would decrease even more, creating a vicious cycle and leaving lower income students stuck with a deteriorating quality of education and student life. ♦



The Death of Independent Cinemas

Angelina Zahajko
ARTS AND CULTURE

In December 2020, WarnerMedia — the entertainment conglomerate that owns Warner Bros. and HBO — announced they would be releasing their entire 2021 movie slate on their new streaming service HBO Max, in addition to regularly scheduled theatrical releases. Despite earning Wall Street and Silicon Valley's praise, their unforeseen decision has been enveloped in controversy, sparking public outrage from high-profile actors, lobbyists, and filmmakers, including *Tenet*'s Christopher Nolan, *Wonder Woman 1984*'s Patty Jenkins, and *Dune*'s Denis Villeneuve.

Many major studios have used the ongoing pandemic to launch or endorse their streaming services; in fact, WarnerMedia's HBO Max has spent the year competing against new rising stars like Disney's Disney+ and

NBCUniversal's Peacock. However, this explicit divergence from Hollywood's distribution model threatens the theatrical exclusivity that cinemas — notably, small, independent cinemas — heavily rely on to bring in revenue. Furthermore, should WarnerMedia's streaming experiment pioneer a more profitable way to mass-release films? Will the voices of independent movie studios have as big of a voice in a streaming space dominated by big-budget blockbusters?

On March 16, 2020, Canada's largest cinema franchise, Cineplex Inc., announced that they would be temporarily closing their doors on all of their 165 theatres in response to the coronavirus pandemic, with independent theatres issuing similar statements. Nearly one year later, Cineplex Inc. has been able to sell assets to manage debt, but many independent cinemas are facing shutdowns.

Health concerns and a lack of films available for theatrical distribution have taken the lives of many long-standing community cinemas across Canada.

For many independent cinemas, hosting online movie nights and monetary community support have been generating enough revenue to keep them alive. However, critics are speculating that, even if indie cinemas survive the full vaccine rollout, WarnerMedia could set a new distribution precedent that could inflict long-term financial damage on domestic theatres.

The Independent Cinema Alliance has voiced their concerns to WarnerMedia, pleading for them to reverse their decision due to the value of theatrical exclusivity (a period of traditionally 90 days where a film can only be seen in theatres). Basic supply and demand models can explain why this trend is dangerous specifically for small theatres: if people can enjoy the same eccentric and artistic films



Even if indie cinemas survive the full vaccine rollout, WarnerMedia could set a new distribution precedent that could inflict long-term financial damage on domestic theatres.

that are exclusive to indie cinemas from the comfort of their homes, streaming services become a very favourable substitute for cinemas. When consumers are presented with a more convenient option, it is inevitable that some will forego the cinematic experience and download HBO Max, therefore, decreasing independent theatre demand and driving down their revenues.

In predicting the future of independent cinemas, we must consider the consumer as much as the distributor. Therefore, it is undeniable that this streaming service choice will make 2021's most anticipated films much more accessible and affordable.

When accounting for transportation, tickets, and concession, a night at your standard cinema could cost you approximately \$30; however, for American consumers, HBO Max is priced at 14.99 per month and contains a catalogue of over 10 000 hours of content. For half the price of a single night at the movies, one has access to all HBO Originals, the full DC Universe collection and the Harry Potter TV series, classic sitcoms like *Friends*, and more, in addition to their highly anticipated 2021 movie slate.

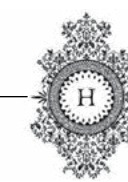
COVID-19 has infected over 100 million people worldwide, with over 26 million in the United States alone. While President Joe Biden intends to administer 100 million vaccine shots in his first 100 days of office, the pandemic rages in America, causing alarming rates of anxiety and unemployment in its wake. Both the safety concerns surrounding the pandemic and the glaring recession that many Americans face make streaming a very favourable option — but not for everyone.

At a superficial level, streaming seems like the most accessible form of distribution. However, there's a broadband internet divide in the United States of America that excludes rural communities. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 39% of rural American communities lack access to high-speed broadband internet; therefore, the shutdown of local theatres in favour of streaming would eliminate a large population of potential customers.

So, is this the end of the movie theatre experience? Innis College Principal and former Cinema Studies Director, Charlie Keil, is doubtful, further explaining that the ... *continued on next page*



Illustration courtesy of Iz Leitch



“call for cinema's death” is one that has occurred so often in the face of new technology that it borders on the edge of “self-parody”.

“Given all the technological competition it has had to contend with, it has proven to be an incredibly resilient media...” he says, “[However] it's not necessarily that cinema itself will die, so much as certain variants may have a tougher time.” And those variants are the independent theatres.

Dr. Keil uses the “media behemoth” Walt Disney Pictures and their recent acquisition of 20th Century Fox to demonstrate a scary shift for the independent theatres and the studios who fund them. Searchlight Pictures, an independent offshoot of 20th Century Fox, has produced some of the best indie films of recent years, like *Slumdog Millionaire*, *12 Years a Slave*, and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. However, with Disney's family-friendly policies, Dr. Keil wonders if Disney will have the desire to keep Searchlight Pictures alive.

Studios rely on the theatrical release process to generate revenue, and *Avenger's Endgame's* \$2.503 box office earnings illustrate that clearly. However, as studios acquire or create their own streaming platforms with their private blockbuster agendas, Dr. Keil asks, “Who will be left to serve the independent cinemas?”

Hollywood's distribution arm has fuelled independent cinemas across the continent for centuries; however, WarnerMedia's disruption of that flow greatly jeopardizes the small businesses that highlight the diversity of today's film landscape. With revenues impeded by the pandemic and content being snatched up by Netflix and other streaming services, the future of independent theatres can feel grim. However, with unprecedented change comes a surge in unprecedented creation. By continuing to support local cinemas and businesses, let's hope that we can all take part in observing that creation together. ♦

How COVID-19 Has Affected Live Performers

Sofi Abouassali
ARTS AND CULTURE

Broadway's current dark period will signify the longest shutdown period so far in history, the last time being for 48 hours after the 9/11 attacks. However, while audiences may be disappointed, many of the live performers are devastated.

With Broadway going dark, live performers everywhere, both on and off-Broadway, are not only losing the ability to do what they love but are also losing health insurance. For performers with life-threatening conditions, the risk of losing this could be enough to change careers, even if they are not happy about having to leave.

Stage performers typically earn coverage based on the number of weeks worked per year. Due to Broadway going dark, there is a lack of work to meet the necessary amount of weeks to have this coverage, ultimately pushing 200–300 union members off of their insurance each month according to Actors' Equity.

In regards to health fund reserves, by the middle of 2021, with theatres remaining dark, reserves will have drained from \$120 million to \$30 million. Performers who have already lost coverage mostly qualify for Medicaid with the lowering income. Some are opting to pay for COBRA insurance each month, just as some are seeking out marketplace plans.

Nonprofits, such as The Actors Fund, have given out financial assistance to theatre professionals on their own and through grant partnerships. Many are even seeking out other work or plans. Actors have decided to take online classes for more work opportunities, and some are seeking out voiceover jobs or working as coaches.

When theatres reopen, there could be a booming return to the seats, or a hesitancy from the crowds. After the shutdown following 9/11, advertisements were recorded to entice audiences back into theatres to offset the panic the attacks had left in people.

Either way, this will inevitably impact the future of live performance, possibly calling on more technological means for distribution of theatre or more widespread entertainment, as much talent has exited New York City. And because much talent has left, it

could be challenging to develop possible workarounds or solutions to this predicament.

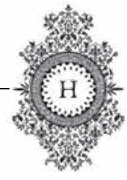
We have already seen how the pandemic shaped the release of *Hamilton*. Meant to be released on the silver screen, *Hamilton* was instead released on the streaming platform Disney+ due to the pandemic shutting down movie theatres. There could be the possibility of live-streaming theatre performances through platforms such as ShowShare and selling tickets for audiences to tune in.

If there is a call for talent to migrate back towards the city, there could be possible group quarantining and regular COVID testing, with the cast, crew, and orchestra only keeping company with each other. Of course, there would need to be mental health services available if this were the case, and with Broadway shows requiring hundreds of people, there can be difficulty in keeping a safe and risk-free space.

With this potential mixing of film, television, and theatre, there could also be a consolidating of performers' unions. This would blur the lines between the Actors' Equity Association and SAG-AFTRA. If these unions were to merge, performers would then need to be under contracts from two unions. This could lead to many disputes, so while plausible, it may not be a solution that should last past the pandemic shutdown.

By providing artists with economic benefits and health support, from Broadway to freelance artists, when the world completes mourning, there will be an incredible emergence of art to reflect upon and teach us about ourselves from this process. Surely there will be much exciting material influenced by or developed during this time, whether we are watching it from home or gathered together. ♦





Podcast Recommendations

Rishibh Prakash

ARTS AND CULTURE

I ventured into the world of podcasts last year and was simply amazed by all of it. With such a diverse medium, there's a little something for everybody. With this in mind, I've tried to pick a wide(ish) variety of genres, so hopefully there'll be something you enjoy in here. Happy listening!

1. Anthropocene Reviewed

Hosted by the author John Green, (yes the guy who wrote *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Looking for Alaska*, etc.), the *Anthropocene Reviewed*, in John's own words, "reviews different facets of the human-centered planet on a five-star scale". John reviews everything from Hawaiian pizza to cholera to the Taco Bell breakfast menu, reflecting on how wonderful (or not) these things are. I would say this podcast is John Green at his finest: his thoughtful, beautiful writing along with his wonderful voice talking about the most mundane things in the most awe-inspiring way. A truly unique podcast which John Green fans are sure to love.

2. Dan Carlin's Hardcore History

I'll be honest, I used to find history a remarkably boring subject. The keyword there is "used to". Dan Carlin's excellent narration and clear passion were more than enough to sway me. Carlin enjoys delving into what he calls "the extremes of human experience" and by god does he take you with him. Each episode is easily 3 hours long with some going past 6. Moreover, each episode is usually part of a multi-episode series around a particular topic, so you can be assured you will be diving quite deep into WWI or the Persian Empire or the Nuclear Age or whatever has caught Carlin's fancy. But delving into incredible detail is the real charm of this podcast. Even if you find history sleep inducing, I would strongly recommend giving this one a try. You may be surprised by how captivating it is.

3. The Memory Palace

There are so many little tidbits of history that are easy to forget. Like how a determined widower became the first to bring a live panda to the US or how at one point there were Indian cobras slithering in Springfield, Missouri. Nate DiMeo gives these little stories a home, carving a little corner for each one with his voice. And I must say, each corner is sculpted beautifully to give life to its story. The characters are introduced in just the right way; the context is set in just the right manner; the details are given at just the right times. There is an art to telling non-fictional stories and Nate has truly mastered it. Every story is a pleasure to listen to and think about.

4. Welcome to Night Vale

Some of the most fun podcasts are those that are fictional and one of the most fun fictional podcasts is *Welcome to Night Vale*. To put simply, *Welcome to Nightvale* is a radio show hosted by Cecil Palmer, a radio broadcaster from the fictional town of Night Vale, sharing with us the strange occurrences in his town. Any listener is no doubt screaming right now that I have completely misrepresented the show, but hopefully they will also agree that this is a show that is very hard to describe. Perhaps a fairer portrayal comes by sharing the very first line of the very first episode: "A friendly desert community where the sun is hot, the moon is beautiful, and mysterious lights pass overhead while we all pretend to sleep."

5. Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend

Conan O'Brien is clearly one of best late night talk show hosts (yes, I am prepared to fight you on this) and where he shines even brighter is in podcast form. Joined by his wonderful assistant, Sona Movsesian, and his producer, Matt Gourley, Conan embarks on a quest to make friends with the people he's interviewed over the years. Conan's quick wit and dry humour have never shined brighter and free from the restrictions of TV, his eccentricities are truly brought forward. Easily one of the most entertaining shows out there (to be honest, even the ad reads are fun). ♦



The Top Ten Rom-Coms To Watch On Valentine's Day

Jessica Khorana

ARTS AND CULTURE

February is fast approaching, and with it, Valentine's Day. The season of candy hearts, outrageous flower bouquets, and cheesy pop songs about romance will soon be upon us. But February 14 will look a little different this year with *that which shall not be named* plaguing the world. Your previous plans for a romantic candle-lit dinner or going to the theatre for a show will have to be scrapped. Instead, why not stay home, open a bottle of wine, and watch the perfect Valentine's Day movie? Whether you're in a happy committed relationship, drowning in loneliness and ice cream, or completely unaware of what day it is, I have a movie for you. So sit back and relax as we count down the top ten rom-coms for Valentine's Day.



Photos courtesy of Walt Disney Studios

The Proposal (2009)

Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds have so much on-screen chemistry in this hilarious film. Margaret (Bullock) is Andrew's (Reynolds) tenacious boss who is about to be deported

back to Canada and, subsequently, fired. So what does she do in order to stay at her job? Marry her assistant of course! She persuades — more like blackmails — Andy into marrying her so that she can remain in the country. They end up spending the weekend with his family in Alaska for his grandmother's birthday, and hilarity ensues as they attempt to keep up the charade in front of Andy's loved ones and the immigration agent, all the while slowly falling for one another.

Dirty Dancing (1987)

Dirty Dancing is a personal favourite of mine. Between the dance routines, Patrick Swayze's smouldering looks, and the magnetic attraction between Baby and Johnny, this film ages like a fine wine and is perfect for Valentine's Day.

To All the Boys I've Loved Before (2018)

This movie is based off of the Jenny Han novel of the same name. It's a sweet, coming-of-age romance that mixes first relationships, family, figuring out who you are, and the classic high school dynamics. The third film of the series will be dropping on Netflix on February 12, so you can even have a movie marathon and binge-watch the entire trilogy!

The Notebook (2004)

This film is adapted from the Nicholas Sparks novel and has won numerous awards, the most notable being the MTV Movie Award for Best Kiss. The utter passion between Noah and Allie is so strong that it resonates within the audience's very core. Between steamy kisses in the rain, and gut-wrenching moments that will have you reaching for the

tissues, this movie takes you on a rollercoaster of emotions.

Love, Simon (2018)

Love, Simon is a film that depicts a teenager's struggle with his sexual identity and coming out to those closest to him, as well as the classic teenage identity crisis. Serving as a glimpse into the life of LGBTQ+ teens, this movie is both charming and heartwarming. Although, I do recommend that you read the novel (*Simon vs. the Homo sapien Agenda* by Becky Albertalli) first, as it is even more saccharine than the film.



Photos courtesy of 20th Century Fox

Pretty Woman (1990)

Julia Roberts' radiant smile alone is enough reason to watch this film. Roberts plays a prostitute who runs into Richard Gere's character when he's hopelessly lost. She offers directions for a small fee but ends up driving him back to his hotel. Unwilling to spend the night alone, he invites her back to his suite, and their simple one-night arrangement later turns into a week-long stay. What starts off as a business agreement turns into a budding relationship that will leave you swooning. Yes, it may be filled with clichés and cheesy moments, but it's also adorable and loveable enough for those hopeless romantics.

Say Anything (1989)

In this teen rom-com, Lloyd Dobler attempts to win the heart of the beautiful and intelligent valedictorian, Diane Court, immediately after they graduate high school. As their relationship slowly develops, Diane's father expresses his disapproval and encourages her to break up with Lloyd, attempting to separate the young lovers. He temporarily succeeds before they eventually find their way back to one another. This film is refreshing and touching and is guaranteed to make you even the slightest bit emotional.

Ten Things I Hate About You (1999)

Ten Things I Hate About You is a classic '90s teen movie that serves as a modern retelling of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. This spirited and sharp teen rom-com still manages to speak to teens even 22 years after its debut. If you're looking for a good laugh with just a dash of romance, this is the movie for you.



Photos courtesy of Universal Pictures

Love Actually (2003)

Although this is technically a Christmas movie, it still holds during Valentine's Day. This movie follows the interconnected relationships of eight couples and showcases various forms of love: familial

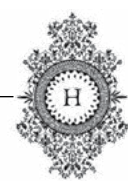
love, romantic love, platonic love, past love, and young love. This light-hearted film will appeal to even the bitterest of cynics.

When Harry Met Sally (1989)

This movie is *the* romantic comedy, and no Valentine's Day movie night would be complete without it. This all-time favourite can be watched over and over again without ever getting old. Between the classic friends-to-lovers trope, incredible dialogue, and undeniable chemistry between Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal, this is one film that you MUST watch. ♦



Photos courtesy of Columbia Pictures



The Netflix Effect: An Ode to the Machines of Hollywood's Past Uncovered Today

Cleo Sood
ARTS AND CULTURE

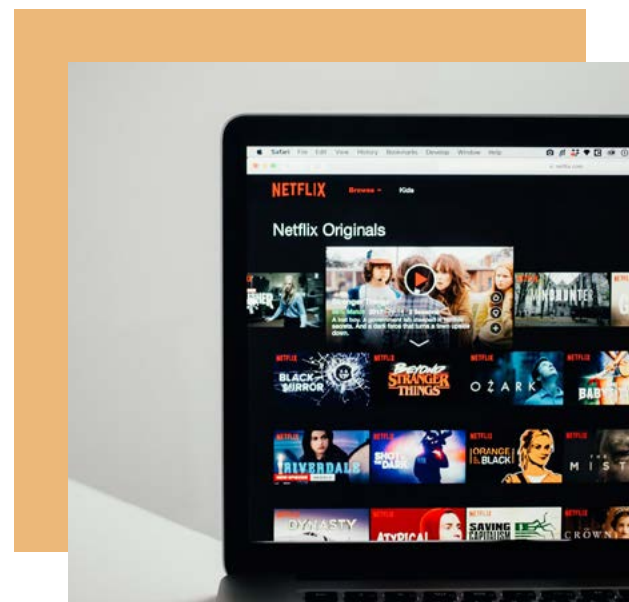
Within weeks of its release, the episodic program *Bridgerton*, a fictional historical drama depicting Regency-era England, became Netflix's latest spectacle to dominate the cultural stage. The effects of its popularity emerged just as quickly — teenaged girls on TikTok parading in corsets and bustiers from Amazon to an orchestral cover of Taylor Swift's "Wildest Dreams", the same tune that lingers during one of the show's highly discussed erotic scenes. Netflix original *The Queen's Gambit*, a program about a young chess prodigy, saw a similar progression. The show debuted to millions, prompting an unprecedented number of eBay searches for chess sets and google searches of chess instructions. Its source material, a novel of the same name by Walter Tevis, is now a *New York Times* Best Seller 37 years after publication. *Bridgerton* and *The Queen's Gambit* epitomize the "Netflix Effect" in its purest form.

The Netflix Effect is a term characterizing the overnight success and, subsequently, the cultural and economic relevance of Netflix original productions. In 2018, 7Park Data said that 80% of the content streamed in the U.S is programming licensed by Netflix. Garnered during a twelve-month period, this data's nature doesn't permit sweeping claims. Rather, it merely points to the ubiquity of memberships in the U.S. Given Netflix's availability in 190 countries, its titles garner more attention than content confined to a broadcasting network or theatrical releases. Effectively a verb — "to stream," à la "Netflix and chill" — Netflix encapsulates mainstream in modernity: altering what we watch, redefining how we watch, with seasonal debuts enabling series binges, and, reminiscent of trend makers from decades ago, directing mass culture in the early 21st century.

In cases where pop culture phenomena evolve, transforming with every milestone amidst the climb to the figurative and literal "top", Netflix was an unexpected sign displaying an arrow for pop star Lizzo. Netflix's 2019 rom-com, *Someone Great*, featured a scene where several of the film's key players cathartically sing along to Lizzo's 2017 single, "Truth Hurts". The song gained immediate traction on TikTok, and

soon enough, Lizzo, a relatively unknown amusician sharing a long history with her craft, catapulted to stardom. Lizzo's story depicts an unconventional champion of the Netflix Effect, the nuances of the platform's viral tendencies, and its effective ode to trend machines of decades past.

Hollywood, America's haven from the harshness of The Great Depression and World War II, was a foreign kingdom centred on a neighbouring plane, accessible via portals in California — locate the nine conspicuous metal panels, appearing deceptively in reach atop parched hills. Grand, theatrical, exploratory, and visually glamorous, cinematic productions of the time mirrored the state of the industry. And the main gear in the industry's machine was the Studio System, a procedure in which five



significant studios produced and distributed their films, the same approach Netflix has adopted.

Netflix, in the contemporary world, has purportedly tapped into various methods of filmmaking that were previously exemplified by the antiquated Studio System. Just as MGM contracted Clarke Gable, Netflix contracted Noah Centineo. Netflix produces in excess, creating more content than viewers demand, just like the studios did. Where the studios would engage in "block booking," the distribution method wherein a unit of typically five films is sold to theatres during each cycle of new releases, Netflix original content permits distribution solely on its platform, aside from theatrical releases for Oscar nominations.

The Studio System's downfall occurred in 1948 when the United States Supreme Court outlawed block booking for violating antitrust laws. The post-WWII American ideology emerged as the Supreme Court advocated for "fair competition." Unlike its predecessors, bound to American

soil and subject to every tremor in the Valley, Netflix's authority surpasses congressional approval. The unbridled power and undefined access retained by tech enterprises set contemporary corporations apart from their forerunners.

Confined to analog data, old studio heads adopted a signature narrative and visual style to reach the masses. As expected, it eventually became tired and cliché. Alternatively, data and distribution in the digital age borders on stalking. Every Netflix user's feed is personalized, allowing Netflix to finance niche ideas for a global audience and then market these titles to their suitable demographics. Netflix gets to bask in all of the industry's coveted shine, campaigning for Emmys and Oscars, whilst remaining unburdened by network regulations condemning nudity and profanity. And despite the threat Netflix's brand of *nouveau riche* presents to Hollywood, creative insiders embrace the company, for Netflix grants them greater artistic leeway and the opportunity to become an overnight sensation like so many others, hence Shonda Rhimes' *Bridgerton* and Scorsese's *The Irishman*.

While the Californian coast remains intact and sunshine, like a spotlight, beams onto the mecca of the movies, American leaders are contentedly inclined to believe their influence on the world stage remains fixed. Plagued by the false presumption that the state's will extends onto the ethics of a globally-oriented digital conglomerate, tech corporations are gravely underestimated. Unlike monarchies and political administrations for whom sovereignty is outlined on land, tech oligarchies transcend ties to nations or citizens. Mark Zuckerberg's 2019 congressional testimony was reduced to an instructional exchange with a gerontocracy: "Senator, we run ads". More recently, President Trump's digital ostracisation enacted by Twitter begs endless questions: Where are the boundaries drawn? Who enforces them? How? At the micro-level, we must consider the intent and nature of the mediums we interact with, acknowledging the realities of the exchange. It's difficult to contend that Netflix is at fault for utilizing an approach that proved unfit in the past, under differing circumstances. But it remains that an intangible source possessing cultural cachet, financial success, and political ascendancy lacks all consideration for or loyalty to the material and humane. ♦



Comedy or Compliance? How Meme Culture Has Affected Our Response to Trauma

Celine Hajj Sleiman
OPINION

Contains content about suicide and depression.

There is perhaps no better embodiment of this generation's attitudes and approaches to self-expression than the modern meme. What began as a few crass jokes and references to popular culture quickly went viral and the satirical tradition of pairing an image and text has been carried on ever since. Memes have evolved within social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, becoming the centre of mass public exchange and sparking trends on an international scale. From old *SpongeBob SquarePants* scenes to Bernie Sanders' mittens, meme culture has rebranded known icons and expanded into categories and sub-categories, each dedicated to sharing specific kinds of content. There are meme accounts for history and art history, sports and sports teams, politics, religions, franchises, and literature. The list goes on.

Memes seem to have emerged as the unlikely common thread between completely unrelated subject matter, popping up wherever there is potential for humour. While the quips were once light-hearted and relatively neutral, they have grown bolder and more controversial, touching on sensitive topics such as suicide, body-shaming, and depression. Although it is meant to be harmless, we have to wonder at what point a cheap laugh is simply in poor taste.

Undoubtedly, memes are a great source of entertainment. A good meme can offer a pleasant pick-me-up or a surprising bout of laughter after a bad day. People have bonded over them, forming friendships over a shared sense of humour. For students in university amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown procedures, memes have created a sense of solidarity between struggling scholars. U of T has its own delightful meme accounts on Instagram and Facebook with an active following and where advice is often shared through posts, stories, or comments. Students seem grateful

for the creative outlet and the distraction from the uncertainty of our collective futures.

But distraction comes with the risk of ignorance. If we can laugh about something then it becomes natural not to worry about it, to enjoy the joke and move on rather than focus on an issue that may warrant our attention. We forget that phrases like "I want to die" can have drastic implications in the real world even though the digital world consistently uses it as a joke. We forget that the victims of shootings and terrorist attacks are owed at the very least the dignity of being taken seriously, of not having their trauma reduced to a widespread mockery.

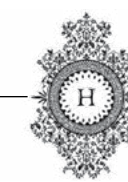
Psychologist Paul Thagard warns against using memes to discuss sensitive topics because they "lump cultural entities together as memes and neglect the variety and complexity of mental representations." The continuous stream of content on social media allows all manner of memes to be grouped together. It should be disconcerting to see jokes about death followed by "When you see 27 missed calls from your mom," but we have become so accustomed to traumatic events being conveyed in a comedic context that we barely look twice to consider the inappropriate medium of expression.

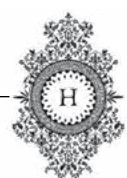
The sardonic humour of meme culture has unconsciously desensitized us to the actual subject matter. Someone may consider themselves an empathetic person and still laugh at a meme regarding suicide or self-harm. Consequently, suicidal thoughts and depression are reduced to just another "thing," a regular part of day-to-day life instead of an illness that requires treatment and emotional support. For those suffering from mental health disorders, this widespread desensitization can affect how they choose to respond to their problems. They may suffer in silence, fearful that their distress will be treated with contempt or indifference rather than understanding and concern. They may even begin to convince themselves that how they're feeling is nothing to worry about and conform to the use of humour as a coping mechanism, as opposed to reaching out to others and actively seeking help.

Most recently, memes about COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders have been popularized, with particular emphasis on people's deteriorating mental states and the anxieties of social isolation. It can be fun to joke about how we've forgotten what outside looks like, or how to articulate full sentences, but it can also be dangerous when comedy is the only outlet for our shared frustrations.

Recent polls have confirmed a significant increase in the prevalence of anxiety, depression and alcoholism over the past year. This suggests that while humour may be the preferred coping mechanism, it is perhaps not the most effective.

When offered the choice between laughter and tears, we are all quick to accept the former, but what does it say that we are able to laugh about affairs of international importance? About our mental health and threats to our wellbeing? Are we optimistic enough to look on the bright side or passive enough to accept instability as the new norm? ♦





Sonder

"The realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own." - John Koenig
Dear reader, this poem mentions perspectives from different people. Can you guess which ones?

Cynthia Zheng
POEM

Do you remember
 how it feels
 to pass by that street,
 the one you used to visit,
 chasing after the glowing sunset?

Do you remember
 how you would pass by the smile of a child...
 as she paced beside her mother,
 her LED shoes would light up
 brighter than that glowing sunset?

And do you remember
 how your favourite food tastes
 in your moonlit bowl,
 sparkled with your mother's love
 at the end of a long day?

Your favourite book lays
 right by your bedside table
 to keep you company
 in times of need.

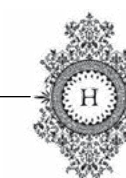
Your favourite song plays
 right through your earphones
 to keep you at ease
 in times of blue (hour).

Your favourite blanket stays
 from your toes right up to your elbows
 to keep you warm
 in times of cold feet.

Your favourite cup of tea
 or perhaps it is coffee
 remains right by your desk
 to keep you grounded
 in times of the hustle and bustle.

Do you remember
 how it feels
 to pass by that street,
 the one you used to visit,
 walking right in front of the glowing sunset?

Do you remember
 and
 do you sonder? ♦



Comparative Analysis

Emily Sakaguchi
POEM

Seeking the quiet that persistence has,
 I might dig in forests rather than seas
 Had I the choice between existence as
 A blade of seagrass or a redwood tree.

Yet seagrass whispers louder every day,
 Of the cold current, of the ocean's weight,
 Of the phantom light of blue-filtered rays,
 Of the ceiling shadows of fish and freight.

Better still, seagrass offers subtlety:
 Water's haze cloaks meadows with the delight
 Of distortion and ambiguity
 By twisting away intrusions of light.

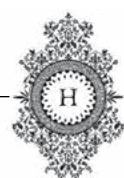
It promises I would not grow tired,
 Would not grow rigid, would not have to stand,
 Would not have to stretch my body skyward
 To live and live and live and live on land.

Instead I could lie close to the seafloor,
 Sprawled with abandon in my own seabed;
 Trees stand the same after wind as before,
 While I could curl with the currents instead.

But blades of seagrass taste little compared
 To redwood trees. Tree bark's rigidity
 Is more than age, and trees are not impaired
 By time and weather-wrought solidity.

And so I would best be a redwood tree,
 And, had you the same choice, by strange chances,
 You might grow as a redwood beside me,
 So that I could hold you with my branches. ♦





Ingredients

Sugar Cookies

- 3/4 (175 mL) cup of room temperature unsalted butter
- 3/4 (175 mL) cup of sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract
- 2 cups of flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- 3/4 tablespoon of salt

Icing

- 2 cups of sifted powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons of milk
- *optional*: sprinkles

Directions

Sugar Cookies

- In a mixing bowl, using an electric mixer or wooden spoon, beat butter with sugar until creamy — for 2 minutes. Then, beat in eggs and vanilla extract.
- In another bowl, blend 2 cups of flour with baking powder and salt. With a wooden spoon, gradually stir flour mixture into butter and egg mixture.
- Incorporate dry ingredients into wet ingredients, gradually and slowly in parts.
- Divide dough into quarters. Form into balls, flatten and wrap in plastic wrap or a bag.
- Place in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
- Preheat oven to 375F.
- Lightly brush butter or olive oil on a baking pan.
- On a countertop, lightly dust flour onto surface and roll out sugar cookie dough. Roll out dough to 0.3 cm thickness. Cut out heart shapes with a cookie cutter.
- Place in the oven for 8 minutes. Allow cookies to cool completely before decorating!

Icing

- Sift 2 cups of powdered sugar into a mixing bowl. Then, add 2 teaspoons of milk.
- Using an electric mixer or wooden spoon, mix ingredients together until smooth. Add extra milk if needed.

EXTRA-NESS

- Add food colouring to icing for multi-coloured heart shaped cookies
- Use a piping bag to write out any names or phrases
- Add some sprinkles and be creative!

Photo courtesy of Jasmine Kara



Valentine's Day Sugar Cookies

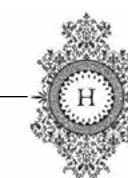
Jasmine Kara
RECIPE

Spread some love this Valentine's Day by baking these tasty and customizable sugar cookies! Show that special someone just how much you care this love-filled season.

Bonus tip: use our Innis/U of T themed pick-up lines to make a lasting impression when delivering your cookies.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Refrigeration Time: 1 hour
Baking Time: 8 minutes ♦

hearts



U of T / Innis Pick-up Lines

Courtesy of The Innis Herald Readers

Hey, my name is U of T WiFi... Can I crash at your place today?

— Jace

How about you and I raise my Girlfriend Point Average from 0 to 1.0?

— Curtis

My love for you is *boundless*.

— Miha

What if we *Quer-kissed* on the front campus? Just kidding... Unless....?

— Ilian

Are you MedSci? 'Cause I just got *lost* in your eyes.

— Curtis

Let's do some roleplay. You're front campus, I'm Meric Gertler, and I'm gonna tear you up.

— Anonymous

You stole my *heart* House.

— Ilian

W-wanna watch a B-BIO120 lecture together?

— Curtis

I love you more than I love Innis.

— Miha

Did your burnt dinner make the building wide fire alarms go off, or are you just happy to see me?

— Loes

Damn, you must be Robarts 'cause I wanna spend all night in you.

— Curtis



Anonymous

Masthead

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